

## **Study of Juvenile Offender Re-entry COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SUBCOMMITTEE**

### **BARRIERS**

*Outlined by the Commission on Youth Advisory Group on July 7, 2010 unless otherwise noted*

1. Confinement does not aid relationships with family, community, and pro-social peers.
2. There is often a lack of skills and resources among family members to facilitate successful reentry and to meet ongoing developmental needs.
3. There can be a lack of family/community ties for older youth with histories of out-of-home placements. The need for permanency planning applies to all youth, including older ones.
4. Youth might be returning to disadvantaged and socially disorganized neighborhoods, which increases the risk of recidivism (Kurbin, 2006). (*Department of Criminal Justice Services [DCJS] comment*)
5. There is a lack of community partnerships and innovative programs – there have been few attempts to look to informal networks for support. Community partnerships need to be built and maintained.
6. Maintaining community ties and building a reentry plan for youth while they are confined is difficult due to distances between the actual community and the facility where the youth is confined.
7. There is a lack of options for gradual release to community.
8. There is a lack of social networking groups that benefit other youth (such as those which may lead to employment, school acceptance, reference for an apartment and credit).
9. Youth must be connected with a family; they need a sense of belonging and stability before addressing educational and workforce needs.
10. Family engagement is a huge struggle for the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). For example, if a youth is in a facility in the Richmond area, their family is from Tidewater, transportation is an issue. In these type of situations, "out of sight, out of mind" is a common and problematic mindset.
11. If a juvenile is 18 when they leave the Juvenile Correctional Center (JCC), their families may feel that they are "done".
12. Budget cuts of Community Service Boards (CSBs) are an issue. There is a lack of communication with a designated agency and no formal agreement with other agencies and organizations in the community. Such an agreement among programs and agencies is critical in the provision of wrap-around services.

13. There are struggles in rural communities due to lack of resources, lack of alternative education programs, and lack of anything waiting for juveniles when they return home.
14. The idea of reintegration may not be highly received in the community, even in faith communities. The “faithful few” must get the job done.
15. There are regions in Virginia that rarely commit youth to DJJ because they know the youth and are able to wrap services around that youth’s needs.
16. VJCCCA allow communities to develop programs tailored to their needs. However, due to budget cuts, these programs are almost gone for this program.
17. Locating jobs for these youth can be a challenge in large cities.
18. DJJ had programs with employers that linked major employers with JCCs. Unfortunately, these were eliminated in budget cuts. Job banks and connections are important.
19. Richmond is very far away for most families, thus more videoconferencing could be beneficial. *(Identified by the Governor’s Juvenile Re-entry Workgroup on July 13, 2010)*
20. More family and community contact with adjudicated juveniles is needed. There should be better visiting hours, such as including evening hours, and people outside of family members should be allowed, like pastors. *(Identified by the Governor’s Juvenile Re-entry Workgroup on July 13, 2010)*
21. With cuts in halfway house beds, more group homes could help those without a place to go. *(Identified by the Governor’s Juvenile Re-entry Workgroup on July 13, 2010)*

### **BARRIERS - GENERAL**

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1. In addition to transitioning from a facility to the community, these youth are transitioning from youth to young adulthood or from middle school to high school.
  - a. Youth transitioning to young adulthood require an appropriate developmental maturity and supports in order to be successful. Accompanying this is a need to understand that youth cannot attain the milestones associated with developmental maturity while confined. There is no opportunity to practice and test independent decision-making and autonomy.
  - b. Most of these youth are years behind their non-delinquent peers developmentally; committed youth are among the most developmentally delayed (Altschuler et al., 2009).
2. How a youth behaves in a facility does not necessarily translate to behavior outside the facility. The transition from confinement to the community can be abrupt and disorienting, creating anxieties which translate into behavior, which, in turn, supports preconceived notions that may attach to the youth by schools, peers, community, family, etc.
3. There is a long-term effect of labeling.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Outlined by the Commission on Youth Advisory Group on July 7, 2010 unless otherwise noted*

1. The Department of Correctional Education (DCE) plays a critical role by providing GED or job training and investigating jobs after completion.
2. Programs to prepare families and offer services to them once juvenile released, what can be done to strengthen family, look at DJJ programs that are effective.
3. Local after school program for at-risk youth, prevention is key for elementary and middle school students.
4. Mechanisms, like electronic monitoring, must focus on prevention.
5. Research the following programs:
  - a. A video visitation pilot program is starting up at Culpeper, which can help maintain connections and service planning.
  - b. DJJ had worked to establish a program to move youth to a facility in their community within 30 miles of their family, but the program was impacted by budget shortfall, study weekend visits and furloughs. Instead, the feasibility of permitting visitation with families 90-days prior to release to re-establish connections should be investigated.
  - c. The AMACHI Mentoring Project in Philadelphia specializes in helping communities and churches mentor to youth of incarcerated parents.
  - d. Richmond city has a program with employers in the community so that youth have marketable skills.
  - e. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) Mentoring program is an effective model for approximately 800 offenders. DJJ guidelines and the Virginia State University/Regent mentoring programs, both proactive models, should be looked into.
  - f. See Fairfax for a family group decision-making model. Investigate a possible role with re-entry